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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [IR](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: READOUT OF RECENT JAPAN-IRAN BILATERAL MEETINGS

REF: IRPO DUBAI 28, IRPO DUBAI 17

CLASSIFIED BY: Ramin Asgard, IRPO Chief, IRPO, DOS.
REASON: 1.4 (d)

¶1. (S/NF) Summary. During an August 25 meeting with IRPO Director and Poloffs, Japanese MFA Iran Desk Officer Junichi Sumi gave an informal readout of the most recent encounters between Japanese and Iranian officials, including regularly scheduled meetings at the Vice Ministerial and Director General levels, as well as the unplanned meeting between President Ahmadinejad and Prime Minister Fukuda on the margins of the June U.N. food summit in Rome. Sumi explained that Japanese officials have been using the meetings as opportunities to encourage the Iranians to accept the incentives package and "freeze-for-freeze" offer rather than trying to "wait out" the end of the current U.S. administration. According to Sumi, Japanese officials are advising the Iranians that many, if not all, elements of the U.S.'s Iran policy will likely remain in place even after January. Sumi also observed that Iran's Ambassador to Tokyo remains well connected to numerous IRIG officials.

Expanded bilateral meeting schedule

¶2. (S/NF) Sumi reported that per a March 2008 agreement, the Japan-Iran Vice-Ministerial Consultation, an initiative begun in 1991, has expanded to include twice-yearly meetings at both the Vice Ministerial and Director General levels (ref IRPO Dubai 28). The most recent meeting was held in Tehran earlier this summer between Japanese Director General Suzuki and Nematollah Ezadi, Director General for East Asia and Oceania. According to Sumi, "nothing significant" came of this meeting, during which only bilateral issues were discussed. The next DG-level meeting is scheduled for October in Tokyo and will focus on human rights. Sumi said the Japanese will not bring up specific human rights cases, but will focus on general issues such as the rights of women and children. Topics for future DG-level meetings include consular issues and disarmament.

Rome encounter between Ahmadinejad and Fukuda

¶3. (S/NF) Sumi explained that the June 3 meeting between Prime Minister Fukuda and President Ahmadinejad at the United Nations food summit in Rome was requested on the spot by the Iranians. Sumi, who is a Farsi speaker, said that had the meeting been scheduled in advance, he would have traveled to Rome to interpret. Because no translator was available, Sumi said the fifty minute meeting was consumed mostly by the translation of pleasantries back and forth via English. Sumi noted this was the first meeting between the heads of the two governments since President Khatami and Prime Minister Mori met in 2000.

Iranian Ambassador to Tokyo: Sayyed Abbas Araghchi

¶4. (S/NF) Sumi observed that Ambassador Araghchi, whose appointment to Tokyo after being Deputy Foreign Minister was seen by some Iran analysts as a demotion for not being hardline enough (ref IRPO Dubai 17 and 28), remains well-connected to influential people inside the IRIG. Sumi explained that since Araghchi's arrival in Tokyo in February, he has become a popular and respected member of the diplomatic circuit. According to Sumi, the Japanese now believe that Araghchi had a "problem" with President Ahmadinejad and was sent to Tokyo by Foreign Minister Mottaki in an effort to "protect" him. Sumi believes Araghchi remains close to both Ali Larijani, his brother Mohammad Javad Larijani, as well as senior foreign affairs advisor to Supreme Leader Khamenei, Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, and is able to contact all three men directly. (Note: both Larijanis and Dr. Velayati are all influential "traditional conservatives.") By way of example, Sumi cited Araghchi's accurate prediction of the date for the July P5 +1 meeting in Geneva before it was announced.

Trade between Japan and Iran remains consistent

¶5. (S/NF) At the end of the meeting, Sumi reviewed recent trade statistics between Iran and Japan. He noted that while the \$14 billion of trade between the two countries in 2007 was slightly up from the previous year, exports of crude oil from Iran to Japan accounted for fully 90% of that figure. According to Sumi, 20% of all Iranian oil exports are sold to Japan. He also stated that China had overtaken Japan in 2006 as Iran's largest single trading partner, noting that in 2007 China bought approximating 15% of Iran's export oil and the Japanese believe that percentage is on track to increase markedly this year.

ASGARD